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TWO MOTHERS.

DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS.

FOR YOUNG LADIES.

BY

DOROTHY REYNARTZ.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

The purchase of this play includes permission for performance by amateurs; for performance on the professional stage arrangements must be made with the publisher.

JOSEPH F. WAGNER, (Inc.)
NEW YORK.

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TWO MOTHERS.

CHARACTERS.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.
TWO ANGELS.
HILDEGARD, Widowed Countess of Tannberg.
ADELHEID, Her Daughter.
ELIZABETH, Hildegard's Sister.
MARGARET, Wife of the Bailiff of the Castle.
BERTHA, Margaret's Daughter and Adelheid's Friend.
CHRISTINA, AGNES, } Young Girls Serving in the Castle Tannberg.
SIX OR EIGHT YOUNG GIRLS, Maids in the Castle.
THE QUEEN OF TUNIS.
TWO OF HER COURT LADIES.

ACT I. The Castle of Tannberg.
ACT II. The Woods of Tannberg.
ACT III. Tunis.
ACT IV. The Woods of Tannberg.

Between Act I. and II. a period of three months has elapsed.

Act I.

The scene represents a room in the Castle Tannberg. A door in the middle. A center-table, some chairs. To the left, in the back of the room, a small table; on it, either a picture or a statue of the Blessed Virgin, under a canopy of light blue or white silk or muslin; in front of it are lighted tapers and flowers, space being left for two growing plants.

The Countess Hildegard, putting the finishing touches to the little oratory, steps back and contemplates her work with pride and pleasure.

Elizabeth sits to the right, busied with some needlework.

HILDEGARD [turning to Elizabeth]. Well, sister mine, are you not going to look at my oratory? [Teasingly] You should be satisfied with my "artistic hand!"

ELIZABETH. Wait, Hildegard, until this work is finished, and then I shall look at it.

HILDEGARD. Oh! leave your work. It won't run away; neither, I hope, will my oratory—but the first pleasure in a finished work is so delightful, yet so soon gone. Come share my pleasure, sister dear. Do drop your work and come admire mine.

ELIZABETH [getting up, gives a hasty glance toward the oratory]. Well then, for your sake, I will look at it. [To Hildegard, after another glance at the oratory]. Though I cannot understand how in such child's play——

HILDEGARD. Oh! do not abuse what gives me such heartfelt pleasure!

ELIZABETH. That is what I cannot account for. Devotion! Certainly, who should not nourish devotion? Who stands not in need of prayer in this valley of tears? Only——

HILDEGARD. Very wise you are, and also pious, dearest sister, but your life of wealth and ease and constant travel, in which you have seen and experienced so much, has robbed your heart of the bloom of tender, childlike simplicity.

ELIZABETH. Oh, I have no desire for childlike simplicity.

HILDEGARD [seating herself to some work]. But you should not look at it askance, and murmur against it, in us who are less experienced. You grew up in the Court of the Duke and gathered rich nourishment for your mind. We—here in the castle, retired from the world, in peaceful solitude—we relish a piece of black bread and a bowl of milk, and are happy in the devotion of our people. The heart, under the coarse garment, does not love less, though the words be not so choice and picked and the sound not so melodious.

ELIZABETH. I leave you to your ideas—leave me to mine.

HILDEGARD. Not quite undisturbed do you regard our ways, dear sister, that I have noticed—especially when to our dear Lady——

ELIZABETH. Yes—that!

HILDEGARD. Have I touched the tender spot where dear Elizabeth is easily hurt? Acknowledge it!

ELIZABETH. What have I to acknowledge? I also honor the Mother of God; but so exaggeratedly as you—

only calling upon Mary for help, leaving hardly anything to the Saviour's intercession, seeming to honor her almost more than our Saviour—I certainly do not.

HILDEGARD. You think God must feel hurt because we so often call upon His mother for help.

ELIZABETH. Yes, that is about what I mean. You rob the Son of God of the honor that is His due and give it in superfluity to His mother.

HILDEGARD. Were I clever and learned like you I should know how to express myself in eloquent language in defence of this love and honor to Mary our mother.

ELIZABETH. Eloquent language is not always the expression of right and truth.

HILDEGARD. Well, then, my meaning is this: if I desired a great favor from the duke of our land, something most important for my welfare, or the welfare of those dear to me, and I should turn to the duchess, the mother of the young prince, do you think he would feel that the honor due him had been lessened by having the mother plead for me? Would he believe on that account that we wished to place his mother on the throne and no longer have him for our duke, our prince, from whom all favors come, and without whose consent the mother will and can grant nothing? The mother must ask—the same as others—only, and that surely you will acknowledge, how much more readily would a request be granted if the mother plead.

ELIZABETH. I yield to the pious words of my dear sister. Often have I begun to contend with you over your devotion to Mary, but was ever silenced by your pious reasoning. I let you do as you please in the matter, Hildegard, only do not ask that, as an old garment, I cast my soul from me and slip into yours. Show and praise to me your little altar for the first of May—for "Mary's month," as you wish to hear it called. [Gets up, and taking Hildegard's hand, leads her before the oratory.]

HILDEGARD. Yes, for "Mary's month!" To us in the castle May shall be indeed celebrated as Mary's month; and for my chapel in the woods yonder—oh, for my dear little chapel!—what pretty garlands I have woven!

ELIZABETH [examining the altar]. Very ingeniously have you arranged it—the white veil, the choice of flowers.

HILDEGARD. It is very simple, but love must make up for what is lacking in beauty and skill.

ELIZABETH. And abundantly will your love make up.

ADELHEID [appears at the door carrying a rosebush on which a remarkably beautiful rose is blooming; she

holds it up to view, exclaiming in joyous tones]: Look mother—look, auntie! See what the sweet month of May has brought to me. Yes, is it not astonishingly beautiful? Such a rose should not be shown for nothing. I do not believe there is another such rose in the whole duchy.

ELIZABETH. It is indeed a flower of rare beauty.

HILDEGARD. A lovely gift of spring! You should indeed be grateful. But will you not give it to the Mother of God—place it here in honor of our Queen of May?

ADELHEID. Oh, how gladly! [Places the plant before the picture.] Here, sweet mother, take my rose; receive the gift and bless thy child. God knew its destiny, hence bade it bloom in perfect beauty; and, dear mother, what a message this flower brings to me!

HILDEGARD. What message, Adelheid? Explain!

ADELHEID. Mother, surely you have not forgotten! And you, Aunt Elizabeth, do you not remember, either?

ELIZABETH. What should I remember?

HILDEGARD. To what do you allude, dear child?

ADELHEID [teasingly slow]. About a month ago—do you really not remember, dear mother?—about a month ago a messenger came from Weilersburg, with a little note——

HILDEGARD. Yes, yes! Now I recall it! He brought the news that all the young girls were being gathered together to form a pilgrimage to Loretto to the holy house of Nazareth.

ELIZABETH. And Adelheid found great delight in the news of this singular expedition. I remember it now, perfectly. Also Bertha, the bailiff's daughter, was happy over the plan, and they both wished to start immediately for Loretto.

ADELHEID. No, we only wished to send word immediately to Weilersburg that Tannberg would surely be represented.

HILDEGARD. It is so far, and too dangerous an undertaking.

ADELHEID. But, mother dear, your promise has been given. Oh, do not take it back!

ELIZABETH. What—you have given your permission, Hildegard?

HILDEGARD. Did I really give my promise?

ADELHEID. Not at the moment, dearest mother; but remember you gave us each a little rosebush to watch and tend, saying: "The one upon whose rosebush first shall bloom a rose may join the pilgrimage to Loretto." Here is my rosebush and this is the first rose.

HILDEGARD. I promised—yes, I remember, dear child, and my word shall be kept.

ELIZABETH. Equally unadvised and thoughtless do I consider the promise and its fulfilment.

ADELHEID. And why, dear aunt?

ELIZABETH. Because the way is unknown to you, the journey over the mountain is attended by many difficulties, then the voyage over the sea, the storms, the danger of foundering on the rocks and cliffs of the coast—and young girls, only young girls, you think you can travel in safety among strange, rough people! It is indeed a foolhardy enterprise you contemplate.

ADELHEID. Oh, do not paint it in such black, such gloomy colorings. I only think how in sweet union, singing hymns to our Blessed Mother, we will wander from one little shrine to another; the fatigue and trouble shared in common will leave but very little for each. Then Italy—the world's garden, with its ever blue skies and green fields! No hazardous undertaking seems a journey through such a paradise. And the sea—it has its dangers, but also its star, the "Star of the Sea," our mother! She will guide and watch over her children.

ELIZABETH. Well, Hildegard, do you permit this journey?

ADELHEID. Yes, yes, dear mother, I beg of you!

HILDEGARD. I must—I pledged my word and must redeem it!

ADELHEID. Thank you, thank you, best of mothers. [Kisses Hildegard's hand.] Our Heavenly Mother will reward you.

ELIZABETH. Await the day when my warning will be remembered. The day will come, of that I am sure!

HILDEGARD. When do you leave the castle, my little Adelheid?

ADELHEID. To-morrow, mother, on the first day of May, we start on our pilgrimage. At the Castle Weilersburg I am to join the other girls.

HILDEGARD. To-morrow already? How soon that is! You must make some preparations for such a long absence.

ADELHEID. All is prepared, dear mother. Whilst awaiting your kind consent, I prepared all I need—yes, more than that. I even sent my little pack to Weilersburg; so I must only send myself after it.

ELIZABETH. What is done in haste is sure to be regretted.

ADELHEID. Please do not be angry, dear aunt.

ELIZABETH. It is not with you that I am provoked, but with your singular fancy.

HILDEGARD. For three long months must I be separated from my Adelheid?

ADELHEID. So long also must I be separated from my mother. Then I shall remain with you and be your Adelheid ever, but richer far in grace, and, if possible, in love for you, dearest mother!

HILDEGARD. The best of gifts you will bring back. Willingly, therefore, should I pay the cost.

ADELHEID. Now I must hasten to tell my joy to Bertha and tease her a little over her belated rose. God's blessing be with you both! [Starts to leave the room, but is prevented by the entrance of Bertha, equally happy in the possession of a blooming rosebush.]

BERTHA [to Adelheid]. No, no, Adelheid, don't run off. Just stay here and look at this wonderful flower! Good morning, all! I bring the first messenger of spring!

ADELHEID. What, Bertha! Also a rose? But see, you are too late. My bush bore the first bloom.

HILDEGARD. Yes, dear Bertha, Adelheid's rose is already here, but yours also is worthy a place of honor. So come, place it on Our Lady's altar. [Bertha places her plant next to Adelheid's.]

HILDEGARD [examining the roses]. It is astonishing how alike these flowers are; there is no shade of difference!

ADELHEID [to Bertha]. I have already obtained the fruit of the first bloom. I go to Loretto.

BERTHA. Wait, wait, Adelheid; so readily I do not give in, nor sacrifice the dearest wish of my heart! Not just since some moments bloomed this rose of mine; oh, no! This morning early I went to my window, but still closed in sleep was my rosebud. Then from the valley rang out loud and clear the Angelus bell; as if awakened by the angel's salutation, my bud lifted up its head and opened to the sunshine, and e'er the bell had ceased its peal my rose appeared in all its present beauty.

ADELHEID. My rose also unfolded its dainty petals with the angel's morning greeting.

BERTHA. Not earlier then, nor later, bloomed my rose than yours.

ADELHEID. Truly, mother dear, there are two first roses, and Mary calls us both to Loretto!

BERTHA. So it is, dear Countess; do let Mary's call be answered!

ELIZABETH. In advance these girls have arranged their plan, it seems to me.

ADELHEID. Truly not, dear mother. We would not sneak, through lying, to Loretto to the Blessed Mother's holy house.

HILDEGARD. For you, Bertha, I am not free to decide, cannot refuse, cannot consent. What think you would your mother say?

BERTHA. My mother leaves it in your hands. But if you wish, I shall call her.

HILDEGARD. Yes, do so, my child.

ADELHEID. Let me go with you. [Exit Adelheid and Bertha.]

ELIZABETH. A month ago, when the messenger came with this unfortunate intelligence, you thought Adelheid and Bertha indispensable to your happiness. You said you could not spare either of them. And now you allow yourself to be talked over, to be deceived, I should like to say, into thinking they are not necessary to you. You are going to send them both away for the entire summer. Well, I wish you joy!

HILDEGARD. It is a sacrifice; yes, a great one for me, to let my daughter go and faithful Bertha. But God desires sacrifice, and the Blessed Mother has plainly shown how acceptable it would be.

ELIZABETH. Now again you speak in terms I never can grasp or understand. I hear steps, probably Margaret. [Enter Margaret, Bertha and Adelheid.]

HILDEGARD [going toward Bertha's mother]. Dear Margaret, with you rests the decision. Do you allow your daughter to go?

MARGARET. She has my permission, Countess!

HILDEGARD. Then I am at rest. It is a great consolation, Margaret, that my Adelheid does not go unaccompanied among strangers. By her side will be her dearest friend and with her a goodly share of home and home's affection.

ADELHEID. My heartfelt thanks, dear Margaret.

BERTHA. How grateful am I to this first day of May which brought my rose to me.

HILDEGARD. With what pleasure, when you are far distant, my dear children, shall I think how, like the two roses, your childish hearts have opened and blossomed with love to Mary; how together you will be wandering, praying and singing praises to the Queen of Heaven, in love united and each the angel guardian of the other.

MARGARET. And in three months from to-day you

will return. The woodland chapel will be the happy spot where we shall meet.

HILDEGARD. Yes, the chapel in the woods, where is the miraculous image of our Blessed Lady. Every day, while you wander in distant lands, I shall descend to our woodland chapel and speak of you to our dear Mother and let her tell me about you. There will our happy meeting find place when you return, full of joy and rich in heavenly gifts.

ADELHEID. We must say farewell, mother; but 'twill not be so long e'er we return. Give us your blessing; you also, Aunt Elizabeth, and you, dear Margaret.

BERTHA. Yes, the blessing of all rest upon us! [Both kneel.]

HILDEGARD. From the depths of my heart, dear children, be blessed in the name of Jesus and Mary.

MARGARET. God be with you ever on your pilgrimage, and may His angels watch over you always.

ELIZABETH. Though I cannot rise to the height of your devotion, my blessing nevertheless be yours, because I love you. God be with you now and ever!

ADELHEID [rises, also Bertha]. Farewell, dear, dear mother; farewell, good aunt, and you, friend Margaret.

BERTHA. Farewell, dear friends. God watch over you, my dear mother!

HILDEGARD [kisses Adelheid and Bertha]. Go, my children, and God be with you. Take my prayers to Mary's shrine! [Exit Adelheid and Bertha, the others accompanying them.]

Act II.

The scene represents the woods near the Castle of Tannberg. In the background a stone chapel, if possible with a tower, a thick growth of trees on either side. In front, to the left, a low, moss-covered stone seat; to the right of it a stone surface, about a foot from the ground. The entrance to the chapel is shut off by a curtain. Hildegard and Elizabeth appear from the left. Hildegard seems sad and weary.

ELIZABETH. This day is the last, is it not, Hildegard, that I am to accompany you here?

HILDEGARD. The last? I do not grasp your meaning. Did you think I meant with to-day to cease giving honor to the Blessed Virgin?

ELIZABETH. Understand me rightly! The last time concerns me only. You will no longer need the service of

your sister, as your dear daughter returns to again claim the privilege.

HILDEGARD. Yes, yes, my dear Adelheid, I am to see her again to-day, after so long, so long a time! [Seats herself on the stone before the chapel. Elizabeth stands by her side.]

ELIZABETH. I rejoice indeed, especially though on your account. Who would have thought you could so change during the three months of your daughter's absence.

HILDEGARD. Yes, weak and miserable have I become. You have a right to find fault.

ELIZABETH. You are being consumed by constant longing after Adelheid, and more overcast than in midwinter has the sun arisen for you these summer days.

HILDEGARD. Never should I have thought my heart had so completely entwined itself in my child. Often I have read of holy women who gladly sacrificed the first or only fruit of their love to their faith, to their God. They held out in noble strength, though seeing their beloved child languishing in a martyr's dungeon. For love of Christ they tore their treasures from their hearts, from the home circle of love, and heroically led them to suffer torture and death, offering them as heavenly brides to the Saviour.

ELIZABETH. That would be beyond the power of your mother heart.

HILDEGARD. You indeed speak truth! How often, Elizabeth, in reading or hearing of such sacrifices my heart was inflamed with love of God, and I allowed myself to conceive the idea that I also would be one of those heroic mothers, and now!

ELIZABETH. The test is ending, Hildegard. To-day your daughter will return to you.

HILDEGARD. Yes, yes, the test is ending. To my reproach, I have been found wanting! But I cannot find the right feelings of shame and contrition. The reproach is almost sweet. I have not stood the test, but my Adelheid returns to me.

ELIZABETH. Already in the expectation you have found new strength.

HILDEGARD. That it should yet but be expectation and not the delight of a first embrace! What doubts, what fears between the hope and the reality.

ELIZABETH. Do not embitter for yourself the intervening time. The blessed hour of your reunion is near at hand.

HILDEGARD. Blessed, indeed, will be that hour! Oh, if Adelheid were not soon to return, were not now hastening to her poor mother's aching heart!

ELIZABETH. Then she would return to-morrow or later.

HILDEGARD. Eternities are for me these to-morrows, these laters!

ELIZABETH. The distance is great and the journey accompanied by many difficulties. One cannot calculate exactly for what may and what may not happen. And on the ocean one is at the mercy of wind and wave. A day, nay a week's delay, should not be considered.

HILDEGARD. You renew the clouds of evil possibilities which dim my clear sky of hope. This is the day on which my Adelheid and all the other sweet girl pilgrims promised to return. Daily have I descended the hill and laid the welfare of my child before the Blessed Mother's heart. She cannot have forgotten to protect my child, for too often, too often have I pleaded!

ELIZABETH. Difficult it has not been to aid the pilgrims, for since their departure the brightest of heavens has smiled over the earth, making it one continual spring.

HILDEGARD. Do not depreciate Blessed Mary's help.

ELIZABETH. That I do not intend. Only to me it does not seem such a particular favor for Mary to watch over an innocent child on a journey, the object of which was to do Her honor at Her shrine; and then this favor, daily prayed for by you, the mother.

HILDEGARD. Your sentiment does not imply veneration or the pious awe that is the Blessed Virgin's due.

ELIZABETH. Verily, should Mary not answer such a prayer as yours, then——

HILDEGARD. Say nothing foolish, Elizabeth!

MARGARET [comes hurriedly, calling aloud]. My dear ladies! Only listen! Forgive my rude disturbance, but pleasure makes me forget all else.

HILDEGARD. Welcome, Margaret. Tell us your pleasant news.

MARGARET [excitedly]. They are already on the path leading to the chapel!

ELIZABETH. The girls, do you mean? The pilgrims from Loretto?

MARGARET. Yes, yes, up on yonder hill, through a clearing in the woods, one can plainly see into the valley. From there I watched the procession. A banner was waving at its head, like an angel's guardian pointing out the way, and already I have heard the still, faint sound of their hymns. Listen, listen, dear friends!

HILDEGARD [rising]. Joy has almost robbed me of my remaining strength, but quickly now shall I regain it.

My Adelheid returns again! Thanks, oh thanks to thee, Maria!

ELIZABETH. They will, no doubt, come first to the chapel; it was so arranged.

[In the distance is heard the song of the pilgrims. Any suitable hymn to the Blessed Virgin.]

MARGARET. Already they are wending their way toward the woods. How near they are! Look now; you can see them through the trees. Excuse me, I must hasten to embrace my child!

ELIZABETH. Well, sister, do you also wish by some moments to anticipate your joy by going to meet your child?

HILDEGARD. No, I shall wait here. How gladly now I wait! In the Virgin Mother's presence shall be our first greeting.

[The sound of the pilgrims' song is now plainly heard as they approach at the end of the hymn. The girls, about eight in number, arrive, carrying staffs and traveling satchels. Bertha, holding her mother by the hand, leads them, followed next by Christina and Agnes.]

MARGARET. Now indeed, dear Bertha, you can feel yourself at home again, welcomed on your first approach by all you love and all who love you!

BERTHA [to Hildegard]. Best greetings, noble lady! [Kisses Hildegard's hand.]

HILDEGARD. Welcome home, Bertha! In Blessed Mary's name, be welcome, all! But why am I kept waiting? Why does my Adelheid not come to be welcomed to her mother's heart?

ELIZABETH. She is most likely hiding. A most unsuitable time she picks for jesting.

HILDEGARD. Where is my child? Where is Adelheid?

[All look at each other in embarrassment.]

HILDEGARD [in troubled tones]. Speak, dear children, speak! Where is my child?

BERTHA [hesitatingly]. Noble lady——

ELIZABETH. Answer the question.

HILDEGARD. Oh! where is my child!

BERTHA. Do not be frightened, noble lady!

HILDEGARD [anxiously]. You have bad news to announce to me? Alas! your face tells more than your words—it tells me all. Adelheid is dead!

ELIZABETH. It cannot be! It cannot be!

BERTHA. No, no, calm yourself, dear Countess. You have read too much from my face. Your daughter lives; yes—she lives!

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HILDEGARD. And where is she?

BERTHA. Be content to learn no more at present, dearest Countess. You have had enough anxiety.

HILDEGARD [in deep distress]. Oh! I will bear all, only not this fear, this dreadful doubt. Better the certainty, and were it of her death, than the long, hopeless agony of doubt!

ELIZABETH. Tell us that which we must know sooner or later!

BERTHA. Your daughter is not dead. But, I fear me, 'tis almost worse. She is imprisoned!

HILDEGARD. Imprisoned? What enemy had my child—my innocent Adelheid, my angel child?

ELIZABETH. And Adelheid alone was imprisoned? How was that? You have indeed kept bad watch over her!

BERTHA. Whether we are to blame for dear Adelheid's fate you will learn by the information I bring you.

MARGARET. Relate the horrors through which you have passed!

BERTHA. To the coast our journey was without adventure, and here also the bright skies made the voyage most promising, but hardly had our vessel sailed out to the open sea, when there appeared on the horizon a ship, mighty in its size, gloom inspiring in its blackness. Our crew seemed paralyzed with fear, and soon, ah, too soon, we understood their dread. The great ship came nearer and nearer; like lightning it seemed to approach. Pirates it carried from the African coast.

HILDEGARD [excitedly]. Quickly, quickly! The robbers came and carried my Adelheid away!

CHRISTINA. Not Adelheid alone. All of us, dear Countess!

ELIZABETH. All of you?

BERTHA. In chains they carried us to the hot African coast; to a castle, shining in its decorations of gold, they led us. Here lived their queen. Our possessions they laid as booty at her feet, and at her feet we also sank, loud in our lamentations.

HILDEGARD. And you were freed?

CHRISTINA. Not immediately. With some pity the queen seemed to look upon us; yet, at a sign from her, they led us away into a dungeon dark and damp. Oh! with deepest distress and greatest dread our souls were filled. We wept, we wailed like timorous children—we all, with one exception!

HILDEGARD. And the exception was?

BERTHA. Your daughter, our dearest Adelheid.

ELIZABETH. She remained calm? She did not even weep?

CHRISTINA. Not a single tear did she shed, but remained cheerful and spoke to us words of sweet consolation. Like St. Peter, she said, has God led us here, though we did not wish to come? His arm can reach us; He will help us, for what is impossible to us is as nothing to Him. Trust in God and in His Blessed Mother!

HILDEGARD. My holy child!

BERTHA. As from an angel came her words of comfort, and while we still listened she began to sing a hymn to the Blessed Virgin. We had not the courage to join our voices to hers, so our little comforter continued alone her hymns for us all.

ELIZABETH. Who would have expected such strength of character from that child, who ever showed herself so timid and dependent?

CHRISTINA. While Adelheid sang the gate clanked, and the queen, accompanied by a slave, entered our prison.

BERTHA. With astonishment she heard the hymn and asked in whose honor it was sung. "In Mary, our Mother's honor," answered Adelheid. "Who is she?" inquired the pagan queen, and Adelheid in beautiful, seemingly inspired words of praise spoke of the Blessed Virgin and her great power.

CHRISTINA. The queen had probably never before been addressed so frankly and with such spirit, and angrily she asked: "Can Mary obtain your freedom from my power?" "If she wills it, yes!" answered Adelheid.

BERTHA. In loud tones of rage she threatened. "Now we shall see if Mary helps you!" Then to us she spoke: "You may depart in freedom. Return to your homes; my best ship is at your service. This girl, though, remains to await the help of her highly lauded Virgin Mary."

HILDEGARD. And you left my child in the dungeon, in the power of that pagan woman?

CHRISTINA. Not without the deepest grief, and only after falling on our knees, we had begged for mercy in behalf of your daughter.

BERTHA. But unrelenting the queen remained. We had to leave her; we were made to go. By force they put us on the ship and as the sails were furled we heard faintly from the prison Adelheid's last greeting and her prayers for us and for her beloved mother.

HILDEGARD [deeply moved]. For her beloved mother! The only bond that now remains is our united cry to Heaven. I shall firmly hold it, and ever more strongly

weave it until it becomes the path which shall lead my darling home to me.

ELIZABETH. Dearest, how courageously, how nobly you bear the dreadful blow!

HILDEGARD. I can bear it while faith and hope remain. Does not my Adelheid, in her distant dungeon, trust in the Blessed Virgin's help, and shall I, her mother, give up to despair?

ELIZABETH. Dare I tell you what I think of Mary's help?

HILDEGARD. No, no—tell it not! Do not destroy the last blossom of tender confidence! Leave me now, dear maidens. I thank you for your love, your devotion. Nobly have you acted, and never will it be forgotten. That your love found no mercy at the hands of the hard, pagan queen, God has permitted, and against His will I dare not murmur. I only dare to trust and pray. Perhaps at this same hour my child is lifting voice and heart to Heaven. In unison with Adelheid shall I also call to our Heavenly Queen. Without witnesses I wish to pray; leave the sorrowing earthly mother alone to pour out her heart to the Blessed Mother in heaven. Fare you well!

BERTHA. Your desire shall be complied with. Farewell, dearest Countess!

ELIZABETH. The shock has been too great, Hildegard. Let me remain with you.

MARGARET. Remember, dear Countess, though the soul be strong the poor body cannot bear all the spirit wills. Allow us to remain and use our poor efforts to console you.

HILDEGARD. There is no human being on this wide earth to console me now but one, and she is far distant—buried in the dungeon's gloom.

ELIZABETH. Allow yourself to be diverted, sister.

HILDEGARD. You mean that I should have other thoughts than of my child? I dare not, even if I could. I only wish to pray. There is but one to console me, whose name is even now perhaps on the lips of Adelheid. Only Maria can strengthen and console me now. Again, fear nothing, but leave me to myself!

ELIZABETH. Since it is your desire, dear sister, farewell!

ALL. Farewell, most noble lady! [Exit all but Hildegard; Elizabeth, Margaret and Bertha to the left, the others to the right.]

[Hildegard goes to the chapel and pulls aside the curtains from the entrance. On a low altar the Blessed Virgin is seated as though on a stone, immovable as a statue. On her knees, over which are spread a fine white linen

cloth, rests the Infant Saviour, over whom the Virgin's head is bent. On either side of the throne are flowers and lighted tapers. Hildegard kneels at the entrance step, a little to one side, so as not to turn her back to the audience, and raises her hands in prayer toward the Blessed Virgin.]

HILDEGARD. Thou hast heard all, O Mary! Thou knowest, oh Queen of Heaven, that for thy sake I have lost my child. In the dungeon's depths now lies my child, because of her trust in thee, because from thy heart she would not be separated. Oh, let her not trust in vain. Make known to the pagan queen the might of thy blessed name. Help—oh, save—my child! All hast thou allowed to return in safety from thy shrine of grace except my Adelheid, who alone made known her love for thee to the enemy of thy name; who, in the midst of her distress, sang songs of praise to thee, and lost not her confidence though thou didst seem to turn away thy face from her. Not a single day have I neglected to ask thy protection for my dear child, and never has it been known that thou hast left unaided those who trust in thee. Shall I be the first to have called on thee in vain, oh, Maria! Return my child to me, O Mother of all Mercy! Thou art the help of sinners, even so be now the help of my innocent child! Thou wilt grant my prayer, I know, O Virgin blest! [Arises and goes toward her.] Surely the Queen of Heaven knows how to share a mother's sorrow. She also is——. [Puts her hand to her forehead as though struck by a sudden thought.] What a thought has come to my mind! It shall be carried out. Yes, Mary is indeed a mother, the best mother of all time, and how she loves her Child! With all of a true mother's depth and strength does she love the divine Babe upon her knee. Mary took from me my child. I shall rob her of the Infant Saviour, and never shall she behold Him more until she has restored to me my child. Forgive me, dear Lord! Surely Thou didst send the thought to me. [She goes to the altar and takes the Christ Child from the Blessed Virgin's lap.] Yes, Maria, I take from thee thy Child; but tenderly, how tenderly, I shall guard it. [She holds in her arms the Christ Child partly covered with the white linen cloth.] And when my daughter, my Adelheid, returns again the Infant Saviour shall return to thee—but no sooner, Maria, no sooner! [She turns away with the divine Infant, which she kisses devoutly.] Hail, divine Infant, hail, Thou holy blessed pledge! All love, all devotion, shall be Thine, only to Thy mother I shall not return Thee until she exchanges for Thee my child. [Turning again toward the altar.] Think over this, Blessed Mother! [Looking upward.] And

should this be an offence that I have committed, dear Father in Heaven, forgive me. 'Tis due to a mother's grief. [Exit quickly.]

[The Blessed Virgin arises from her throne in the chapel, descends and comes toward the entrance. Two little angels, carrying lighted tapers, appear and stand one at either side, as though awaiting her command.]

FIRST ANGEL. Oh, most blessed Queen, how daring are God's creatures!

SECOND ANGEL. Shall we follow and punish this woman?

BLESSED VIRGIN. No, I am not indignant on account of an act caused by the fire of pure love, and a mother's love is so deep, so strong, so pure.

FIRST ANGEL. But she dare not keep the Infant Jesus!

BLESSED VIRGIN. She dares, until I have redeemed the sacred pledge.

SECOND ANGEL. Oh, Queen of Heaven, wilt thou yield to the impetuous demand?

BLESSED VIRGIN. I yield. Accompany me to the imprisoned child. She shall be freed and returned to her home.

FIRST ANGEL. Oh, Queen of Heaven, the maiden we seek lies in chains, far over the sea, in gloomy dungeon, and suffers so patiently.

BLESSED VIRGIN. I have been by her side to console her, and all her suffering will increase the glory of the crown awaiting her in heaven. But this night shall be her last night of suffering. Go before, little angels, and lead me to the child. [Exit angels; the Blessed Virgin slowly follows.]

Act III.

The scene represents a deep cave, the entrance at the back of the stage, in the middle or to the side. The entrance is closed by a strong grating, through which one can see out. To the left is a low slab of stone, on which is a bed of straw. On the ground stands an empty mug. Adelheid is fastened by the hands to a long chain. Before the curtain lifts the accompaniment of Adelheid's song is heard. As the curtain lifts Adelheid sings.

ADELHEID'S SONG.

No human heart in sympathy can hear
My cry of grief and pain;

To thee, Maria, mother dear,
I shall not call in vain.
"Remember, Mary, Virgin fair,
It never yet was told
That he who humbly sought thy care
Departed unconsoled."
No human heart in sympathy can hear
My cry of grief and pain;
To thee, Maria, mother dear,
I shall not call in vain!

Forsaken they believe me now
Within these walls of stone,
As if, O Virgin Mother, thou
Wouldst not send to claim thine own.
Yet thou art looking down on me,
I see thee from above;
My hands they've chain'd, oh, mother, see!
They cannot chain my love.
Forsaken they believe me now
Within these walls of stone,
As if, O Virgin Mother, thou
Wouldst not send to claim thine own.

ADELHEID [goes to the grating and looks sadly out.] For the seventh time the sun is setting since my imprisonment in this dreary dungeon. Forsaken by creatures, but not by God and His blessed mother! Since two days even the little crust of bread has been kept from me and not a drop of water has passed my lips. [Goes again from the grating to the front of the stage.] Oh, most loving Saviour! Dearest mother! How tired is my head, weak my heart and worn with suffering my poor body—strong only is my trust, my hope, in you! I shall think of the holy martyrs and say: welcome this dungeon, these chains, since they will obtain for me the palm branch of the blessed. My throat is parched and dry. Oh, for a drop of water! [Takes up the empty cup and puts it down again.] Empty these two days has been my cup. But cheer up, weak heart, do not despair. The spring of grace will ne'er be dry. With living water will God refresh my soul! [Goes toward the gate, but returns again immediately, shivering with cold.] The night is damp! I shiver with cold! Oh, these dreaded nights—the gloom! the chill! the blackness! the deathlike stillness! Nothing can I hear but the clanking of my chains. [Looks smilingly at the chains.] Oh, these chains! You, my dear mother, know nothing of the

fate of your poor Adelheid! You would certainly smile to see your child in strong chains like a wild beast from which one could not be sufficiently defended. Oh, my mother, am I never more to see you? Never, never more? No, no; the thought is too heartrending—and I must not weaken my poor heart. Oh, Blessed Virgin, in thee be my hope, my trust; thou wilt strengthen me that I can bear whate'er befalls me. [Sing]:

But this, oh, mother, I thee pray:
Oh, strengthen my weak heart,
That through all suffering it may
Ne'er from thee depart.
For me God's grace obtain, mother dear,
Abide with me this night;
I'll not fear if thou art near,
I know thy love, thy might.
But this, oh, mother, I thee pray:
Oh, strengthen my weak heart,
That through all——

[The queen, accompanied by two court ladies, opens the grating during the song and enters, interrupting Adelheid's hymn by calling out]:

QUEEN. What, your spirit is not yet broken! What is that song?

ADELHEID. A little greeting, a little prayer to the Blessed Virgin.

QUEEN. I thought as much! Do you yet trust in the Virgin's power?

ADELHEID. With all my heart do I trust!

QUEEN. And for seven days she has forsaken you!

ADELHEID. Oh, the Blessed Virgin has not forsaken me. She only waits.

QUEEN. And not a crumb of bread has she obtained for her faithful servant, nor a drop of water. A powerful Virgin! And very careful of her children!

ADELHEID. The Virgin Mother obtained for me grace and strength to bear all suffering. Is that not sufficient? Not more than bread and water?

QUEEN. Yet you are suffering?

ADELHEID. No consolation would be needed were I not suffering.

QUEEN. And should you not like to shorten your sufferings?

ADELHEID. Oh, how gladly! I beg of you have mercy!

QUEEN. You can turn your sufferings into joy and gladness.

ADELHEID. To see my mother again—that would indeed be joy.

QUEEN. That also shall be granted; the grating shall be opened, the chains shall fall.

ADELHEID [joyously]. Oh, thank you, gracious queen.

QUEEN. Only deny your Virgin's power. Your lips must no more speak her name, you must cease to call upon her. Your Virgin will not help you! Acknowledge that to me—say she will not help you.

ADELHEID. The Blessed Virgin will help me; that I most firmly believe!

QUEEN. Silence, foolhardy girl! Have your seven days and seven nights of suffering not crushed your spirit? Have not your pangs of hunger, your agony of thirst, conquered the illusion that bids you oppose me?

ADELHEID. No, your majesty! My confidence in and love for my Heavenly Mother have triumphed over earthly pangs and agonies, and my trust in her power has vanquished all tribulation!

QUEEN. Yet, Christian, the hunger gnaws; that you cannot deny.

ADELHEID. God knows how much I suffer. Have pity and send but a crust of bread, a few drops of water!

QUEEN [aside]. In that way I may conquer. [Aloud to her two companions] Bring bread and a goblet of my best wine! [Exit the two women.]

ADELHEID. You are so hard, and yet so kind.

QUEEN [triumphantly]. It is not Mary who gives you food and drink. It is I, Christian, I alone!

ADELHEID. 'Tis Holy Mary, I believe, who inclines your heart toward mercy in my behalf.

QUEEN [angrily]. By the prophets—no! Powerless is the woman you honor. My heart is mine—entirely mine! I—I alone can regulate its beats! [Enter the women carrying bread in a little basket and wine in a golden goblet.]

QUEEN [taking the goblet]. Here, Christian! From my hand receive it! No one yet could boast that from my own hand they received refreshment. I give it to you, and not Mary!

ADELHEID. The Queen of Heaven sent you with it.

QUEEN [angrily]. No one sent me, Christian! I alone have the power to control my actions. Now, quick! Deny your helpless Queen of Heaven, and from my hand the sweetest wine shall be given to refresh you.

ADELHEID. You wish me to deny my Heavenly Mother?

QUEEN. Yes, and I will revile her—you also must help me to revile her.

ADELHEID. Not now, and never, will I deny or revile Blessed Mary's name!

QUEEN [threateningly]. You will not? Then know that if I leave you here, not again shall yonder grating open for you, but slowly, lingeringly, you shall die of hunger and of thirst.

ADELHEID. My freedom, my life, cannot be bought for the price you mention.

QUEEN. Here, take the goblet, and say: dishonored be Mary's name!

ADELHEID [drawing away]. Never!

QUEEN [furiously]. You will not! You will not! Take the Christian and chain her to yonder stone! There, praising her helpless Virgin, shall she languish and die! [The two court ladies lead Adelheid to the bed of straw on the stone slab, upon which she seats herself; they fasten by the chain her hands to the wall so that her arms are stretched out as though crucified, and then step back to the queen.]

QUEEN. Now, child of Mary, here shall we place the bread and wine, that seeing them may increase your sufferings a hundredfold! [The women in waiting place the basket and the goblet on the floor by the empty cup.] Now, let Mary come and free you from my hands if she can! Your so beloved, so mighty Virgin! [Exit Queen and companions.]

ADELHEID [calling after them]. My heart belongs to Mary! [The gate clanks shut; the Queen and her companions can be seen through the bars leaving the dungeon.]

ADELHEID [after a short pause]. My heart belongs to Mary! Oh, look down upon me, Sweet Comforter of the Afflicted! Look down upon thy child! Gentle Saviour, Thee am I privileged to follow! My arms are outstretched, like Thine upon the cross! In Thy agony Thou didst cry out, "I thirst!" and no one gave Thee a drop of water—no one, not even Thy mother! I also, dry and parched, cry out, "I thirst!" but no one offers me a drop—no one, not even my mother! The rings cut deep into my wrists, but, sweet Saviour, iron nails were driven into Thy tender hands. Already it is night again! Abide with me, dear Saviour, and thou, sweet Mother of God! My heart is in peace and soon will be at rest. In spirit I shall be at home once more, a little child, saying my evening hymn at mother's knee.

(Slowly):

"Jesus, gentle Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night;
In the darkness be Thou near me,
Keep me safe 'til morning light;
Let my sins be all forgiven,
Bless the friends I love so well,
Take us all at length to heaven,
Happy dell, with Thee to dwell."

Everyone, Jesus, great and small, bless them, Jesus, bless them all! Good-night, Blessed Mother! Good-night, Maria! [Bows her head in sleep.]

[Faintly is heard the first verse of the Angels' Slumber Song; the sound gradually approaches, and the second verse is heard quite near.]

Sleep, dearest one,
Sleep, dearest one,
The angels watch
O'er thee shall keep.
Yes, sweetly sleep,
Awaken not;
In peace shall rest
Thy weary head;
Hallow'd will be
This dreary spot.
Blest Mary'll come
As thou hast said.
Sleep, dearest one,
Angels watch o'er thee—angels watch.

(Second verse.)

Sleep, dearest one,
Sleep, dearest one,
The angels watch
O'er thee shall keep.
Still hold thee fast
The iron bands,
Soon they'll be loosed
By angels' hands.
The Virgin fair
Will lead thee home;
Heard is thy prayer,
Maria blest will claim her own.
Sleep, dearest one,
Angels watch o'er thee—angels watch.

[Toward the end of the second verse light is seen from the space beyond the grating; soon the light shines into the dungeon, and the two angels with lighted tapers appear at the gate, followed by the Blessed Virgin. The angels break the bolt and open the gate, standing one at either side. The Blessed Virgin passes between them and enters the dungeon; the angels follow and hold their tapers over Adelheid's couch. The Blessed Virgin looks upon her with love and sympathy, and, as the angels cease their song, speaks]:

BLESSED VIRGIN. Poor child! Poor child! How peacefully she sleeps despite her wretchedness!

ADELHEID [speaking in her sleep]. My heart—belongs—to Maria!

BLESSED VIRGIN. And gladly, my child, does Maria give her heart to you. Come, angels, and loosen my Adelheid's chains. Be careful lest you awaken her.

[The angels unfasten Adelheid's hands from the wall, though the chain remains on her arms. Adelheid remains asleep; her hands fall to her sides.]

BLESSED VIRGIN. Now bring the goblet of sweet wine to refresh the little sufferer. [The angels put the goblet to Adelheid's mouth, who drinks, though still sleeping.]

BLESSED VIRGIN [goes to Adelheid and takes her hand, upon which Adelheid arises]. Come, little martyr, Mary's noble child, enough hast thou suffered. Thou shalt by my hand be returned to home and mother.

[The angels again begin their Slumber Song, going in advance with their tapers. The Blessed Virgin follows, gently leading the sleeping Adelheid. They pass out of the gate, the light disappears and the song becomes gradually fainter. The scene at the back of the stage is then shifted and behind it appears the sea; upon it slowly passes from the right toward the left a little ship of white and gold: at either end sits an angel; the Blessed Virgin is in the centre, Adelheid at her feet with her head in the Blessed Virgin's lap. The song softly continues. Should this last scene not be possible to arrange, the curtain may fall after the Blessed Virgin and Adelheid leave the dungeon.]

Act IV.

The scene as in Act II., the woods surrounding the chapel. Bertha and the other girls carrying scythes.

BERTHA [to the others, pointing to the right]. Yonder you are to begin your work. I shall accompany you, the better to show the place.

CHRISTINA. Oh, we know just where it is. It's the field the Countess bought about two years ago, paying three times the value, in order to save the owner from his creditors.

AGNES. It was decided some time since where to-day's work was to be begun. We have not forgotten.

BERTHA. Nevertheless let me descend into the valley with you; it is so lonely here and everything reminds me of Adelheid.

CHRISTINA. Our hearts are also sad at thought of her.

BERTHA. I dare not remain alone, my imagination paints such dreadful pictures of Adelheid's fate—perhaps the worst has already happened—the worst! Oh! away with these thoughts; they tear my heart to pieces!

CHRISTINA. Come with us. From the depth of our hearts have we prayed for her—'tis all that we can do. Vain grief will only unfit us for our work. Drive back sad thoughts with a glance toward heaven.

BERTHA. It does indeed take strength to drive back the endless tears. Deep within my soul have I impressed my grief, but the reins are no stronger than a thread; the least pull and they snap, allowing my grief to pour itself out, taking from me all pleasure in life.

CHRISTINA. Cheer up! Away with vain brooding! Take pleasure in the bright sunshine, the green fields. God can find our Adelheid as well in the dungeon as in the palace. Come, girls, let's sing our harvest song! Away with grief, trust in God, be light of heart!

ALL. Yes, yes, let us sing! [Sing]:

Then with the sun's first awakening ray,
Merrily, merrily we shall descend
Down in the valley, so fresh and so green;
Swinging bright sickles, our footsteps we'll wend
To grassy fields, where we'll reap, where we'll glean,
And ne'er a green blade shall we spare this day—
To grassy fields, where we'll reap, where we'll glean,
And ne'er a green blade shall we spare this day.
When, gay lasses, the sweet grass we have mown,
Our swishing sickles we'll no longer ply;
Fragrant sheaves we'll gather and toss in the sun—
When the sun is sinking, scented hay is dry.
Vesper bells are ringing, our work is done,

To the angels' Ave we shall join our own;
Maria, bless thy children, bless thine own!
To the angels' Ave we shall join our own,
Maria, bless thy children, bless thine own!

Now, my dear Bertha, you are in cheerful mood once more. Your voice rang out as clear and fresh as ever.

BERTHA. With the cheerful song my spirits rose, but now that it is ended they sink again.

CHRISTINA. You will allow your head to droop again! Come quickly to work; you must help us! A merry song and diligent, skilful fingers—these will be the best medicines for grief and weary hearts. Come, come, dear Bertha!

BERTHA. I shall follow you later. [Exit all; Bertha remains for a while engrossed in thought, then slowly follows.]

[Behind the scene the third verse of the Slumber Song is heard; as it grows louder the angels are seen approaching, carrying their lights, slowly followed by the Blessed Virgin with her arm supporting the still sleeping Adelheid. The Blessed Virgin leads Adelheid to the stone seat, upon which she sinks; one of the angels brings from the chapel a green cushion and gently places it under Adelheid's head. The angels then return to the chapel, drawing aside the curtain and standing on either side the entrance while the Blessed Virgin enters; they then let the curtain fall, disappearing themselves into the chapel. The Slumber Song continues until after the entrance of the Blessed Virgin and the angels into the chapel.]

(Third Verse.)

ANGELS' SLUMBER SONG.

Sleep, dearest one,
Sleep, dearest one,
The angels watch
O'er thee shall keep;
Thine eyes did close
In dungeon drear,
But thou wilt wake
With loved ones near.
For Mary's sake
Thou much didst bear,
But she has heard
Thy trusting prayer.
Sleep, dearest one,

Sleep, dearest one,
Angels watch thee—angels watch.

[Bertha appears from the right, her head bowed in grief. She lifts it and begins to speak, not noticing the sleeping Adelheid.]

BERTHA. With every hour of the day my grief increases. It was not in the right way that I sought for consolation and peace of heart. The girls mean well, but sadness has taken too firm a root within my heart, and the more forcibly I try to drive it from me the deeper it seems to enter my soul. Every smile seems a reproach, a poisoned dart seems every joyous word. Creatures cannot help me in my sorrow; there is but one relief: the call to heaven! Yes, in this quiet, peaceful spot will I pray—here —[turns toward the chapel and sees Adelheid]—Oh, my Saviour! What spirit is this? Does it appear to remind me of my forsaken friend? A farewell from the already glorified martyr! Beautiful, tender image of my beloved Adelheid, I am true to you—I pray for you! How peacefully she sleeps! How naturally! It can be no vision—no spirit! What is it? What is it? I am afraid! I must call the others. [Exit.]

[As Bertha disappears the third verse of the Slumber Song of the angels is again faintly heard, ceasing as the maidens appear.]

BERTHA [enters with several of the girls, the others appearing by degrees until all are on the stage]. See now for yourselves what I cannot understand—what you will not believe!

CHRISTINA [astounded]. It is indeed the face and form of Adelheid!

AGNES. It must be Adelheid! But how explain the seeming miracle?

BERTHA. Awe-inspiring is to me the vision, for a spirit it must be!

CHRISTINA. No, no, Bertha. It is but one of the secrets of God's mercy.

AGNES. Why should we take fright? We suddenly find Adelheid again at Mary's feet. Strange indeed seems the appearance, but with what joy should it not fill our breasts.

BERTHA. I cannot yet grasp the miracle. It alarms me to suddenly find all where it seemed impossible to hope for, to expect anything.

CHRISTINA. Be not troubled, but receive the joy that God has sent. A miracle has been performed.

BERTHA. Yes, a miracle! Through God's mercy! Through the prayers of our Heavenly Mother! I will no longer fear, but make known the wonder—first to the heart-broken mother and then to all the world.

CHRISTINA. Yes, let us hasten to the Countess Hildegard. Never yet did she receive such joyful tidings.

AGNES. Countess Hildegard comes herself to seek the joyous information. Yonder she comes with her sister!

BERTHA. Can she bear it?

CHRISTINA. She bore the grief, the appalling grief. She will not break down under this marvelous joy.

[Hildegard and Elizabeth appear from the left.]

BERTHA [hastening to meet them]. Countess, dear Countess, come quickly! Faster yet have traveled wonder and joy!

HILDEGARD. The quick step is the step of joy; that step, Bertha, I have lost forever!

BERTHA. No, no, not forever, dearest Countess——

ELIZABETH. Your words, your ways, seem most strange!

BERTHA. They could not be otherwise at such a time [pointing to Adelheid].

HILDEGARD [at first speechless with amazement, then passing her hand across her forehead]. My eyes are open, my sight is clear. I do not wander in my sleep! I recognize all about me—and yet—it is impossible!

ELIZABETH. Do miracles still take place? Then no trifling one can this be called!

BERTHA. Believe what your eyes show you, dearest Countess. In gentle, peaceful slumber you find again your daughter—your Adelheid!

HILDEGARD. Who was buried in a distant dungeon—who was robbed from her mother's breast!

ELIZABETH. The chains are yet fastened to her hands!

HILDEGARD [to the girls]. You also know 'tis Adelheid? You also see my child?

ALL. Most certainly, dear Countess!

BERTHA. Doubt no longer!

ELIZABETH. I shall awaken her.

HILDEGARD. Leave to the mother that sweet duty! [Stoops over Adelheid and gently touches her.] Adelheid—my Adelheid!

ADELHEID [opens her eyes and fastens them on Hildegard, lifts her head, but still remains seated, gazing wonderingly about her.] My mother! Oh, what a beautiful dream!

HILDEGARD. It is no dream! My child! My child!

ADELHEID [looking wonderingly at Hildegard]. No dream! What then? Am I in heaven?

HILDEGARD. No, but in your earthly home once more. Look about you and see the dear familiar scenes.

ADELHEID [stands up and looks about her]. Then I am again with you, my dear, dear mother—with you, and still alive! Can it be! Here is the beloved woodland chapel! There the castle! Here Bertha, Aunt Elizabeth, and all the maidens of our household!

HILDEGARD. Come, my child, grasp your mother's hand; rest once more upon your mother's breast! [Goes to Adelheid and takes her hands.]

ADELHEID. Again the loving glance of my mother's eye, the sound of her sweet voice, the touch of her dear hand! I am at home—at home with all my loved ones!

HILDEGARD. But whence you came and how is a secret of God's mercy.

ADELHEID [slowly and thoughtfully]. Whence I came?—how? Wait! I cannot yet think clearly. A dungeon—a cavern in the rock—the queen in a fury—and then the chains—these chains—too well I know them—chained to the stone wall—fainting from hunger—then a light—the light of heaven it seemed—and a tall maiden of wonderful beauty and gentleness—and angels! Yes, mother, they brought me here—like in a dream it passed. It was the Blessed Virgin, mother, our Heavenly Queen, just as in our chapel here. Our Virgin Mother appeared to me. By her side I journeyed home.

HILDEGARD. The Blessed Virgin led you home?

ADELHEID. Yes, mother. Clearly now I remember all that passed. I returned, led by the Blessed Virgin's hand, watched by her loving eye. Oh, let me first of all give thanks to our Virgin Queen!

HILDEGARD. Yes, my child, praised be forever Maria the Mother of all Mercy!

ADELHEID [steps to the entrance of the chapel and draws aside the curtain. The Blessed Virgin is seen as before, seated on her throne. Adelheid kneeling]. Oh, most gentle Queen of Heaven! [turning to those about her.] Mother, what has happened? Where is the Infant Jesus? Who has robbed the Virgin Mother of her child?

HILDEGARD. The Infant Jesus is in my custody in the castle. I took the Christ Child from His mother.

ADELHEID [rising]. You? Mother!

HILDEGARD. Yes, I did it, Adelheid. I dared to do

it when my heart was broken at your loss. When you did not return with the other maidens—when I heard all that had happened—I called upon the Queen of Heaven for help, for comfort! In the madness of my grief I overstepped all bounds and wished to force the Virgin Mother to stand by me. I took the precious Babe from her arms, saying: "Not until my Adelheid is returned to me shall the Infant Saviour be returned to thee.

ADELHEID. The Blessed Virgin returned me to you, therefore she cannot be angry.

HILDEGARD. I must not delay. With the swiftness of the wind will I mount the hill to the castle and bring back the Holy Babe to His Virgin Mother. Accompany me, all of you—all! You also, my child!

ADELHEID. Not, dear mother, may I leave this spot, or cross the threshold of my home, until you have redeemed me—until the Blessed Mother is again in possession of her Child. Here shall I remain and wait for you, for I am in pledge to our Heavenly Mother, whom you robbed of her Divine Son.

HILDEGARD. You are right, my child. Noble, honorable are your thoughts! Remain here until I have made the exchange to our sweet Mother. Let the others follow me. In triumphant procession shall the Infant King return. What a triumph for the love eternal of a mother's heart! [Exit all but Adelheid.]

ADELHEID [kneels before the open chapel]. Oh, were I but a little worthy to be thy beloved child, then I should not be in such haste to make the exchange. How happy am I in the thought that for one night at least I was able to console thee in some measure for the loss of thy Blessed Babe. That for one night no one was with thee but thy Adelheid. Oh, what a night it was—the dread, the torture, overcome by thy love; death vanquished by thy mercy. But yesterday my evening hymn was said in a strange, uncivilized land, from the dungeon's depths where I was chained—and to-day! On this bright morning in our peaceful wood I kneel giving thanks to the Mother of all Mercy. With a greeting to thee, Maria, in the gloom of my prison cave, I closed my eyes. They opened to look upon the familiar surroundings of my well-beloved home, and my first morning greeting is again to thee, Maria!

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us
Sinners now, and at the hour of our deaths.
Amen.

[Softly the first verse of the following song is heard; as it ends the procession appears]:

(First.)

Through the portal of the castle
Carry now the Infant King,
To the peaceful woodland chapel
Back the Christ Child we shall bring.

[The maidens come in slowly, two by two, with white veils and wreaths of flowers on their heads. After them walks Hildegard carrying the Divine Child on her arm, over which is thrown the white linen scarf. On either side of Hildegard walk the two angels, carrying lighted tapers. Adelheid arises and steps to one side. When the procession appears on the stage the second verse is heard.]

(Second.)

We shall hasten, mother mild,
To return our precious guest—
Thy gentle Saviour, thy dear Child,
Sweet pledge of faith in our quest.

[During the song Hildegard places the Infant Jesus again on the Blessed Virgin's knee; at the same moment the chains fall from Adelheid's hands, and Hildegard and Adelheid kneel together in the middle, but so placed that one can see into the chapel; the others then separate and kneel on either side, Elizabeth a little to the front of the others.]

HILDEGARD. Now only, O most Blessed Mother, can I truly rejoice in the return of my Adelheid. I would be frightened at my daring hadst thou in thy gentle mercy not already pardoned my rash act. I dare hope for complete forgiveness, for thou didst understand the poor mother's grief. My child was also thine! Thou art the Queen of Heaven, the queen of all the angels. I am thy weak, sinful, though loving, handmaid. Forgive and bless me. Remember, Maria, we are both mothers!

ELIZABETH. Thou hast conquered my heart, sweet mother; its love is henceforth thine. Thou art all fair!

Oh, Virgin Blest, thou art the joy of thy children who trust in thee!

ADELHEID. Never yet, O most tender-hearted Virgin Mary, hath the ear heard that he who ran to thee for refuge was forsaken of God. Thy child I am, O Mother Mary, mother of all love, my heart is thine, Maria!

Now sounds the morning bell so clear,
Heaven-wafted angels' greetings peal
On wings of sound to Maria dear—
Oh, hear our Ave as we kneel.

[The Angelus bell is heard during the last verse and a bright light shines upon the kneeling group.]

END.

[*The MUSIC of the songs in this drama may be had, with Piano Accompaniment, from the publishers. Forwarded free by mail upon receipt of* 25 *cents.*]

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